



Stanislaus County



STATE OF THE COUNTY

DELIVERED BY CHANCE A. CONDIT, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2023 AT 6:30 PM

Welcome-

I do want to thank my friend, past Chair Withrow for his leadership, good humor and guidance after my election to the board. Both he and Supervisor Chiesa have been great mentors throughout this wonderful experience, that is going on 3 years now. I know I speak on behalf of the entire board, in thanking them for their service to this great county, and for their wealth of institutional wisdom. I salute them, as well as Supervisors Grewal and Condit for their willingness to work in a cohesive and collaborative effort to guide and lead our county in establishing best practices for providing services that meet the needs of our county's residents.

I want thank all of our elected and appointed officials- whether City Council, School Board, Community Service District or Municipal Advisory Commission for their partnership and collaboration in making our county a better place to live.

Thank you to all our county employees led by Chief Executive Officer, Jody Hayes, our community organizations, small businesses, large businesses, school districts, and nonprofits. It is an essential value we embody to ensure that we are doing our best to provide the necessary services to the community of which we serve.

We strive to be a county of opportunity, though we face many challenges; I believe opportunity rests within those challenges which we face. An opportunity to strive to do better- to do more than we've done yesterday. To ensure that an equal opportunity is

afforded to everyone, so that they have equal access and resources in order to pursue the American Dream. For, I believe it's not governments role to solve all your problems, but it is the role of the government to allow the opportunity to empower you to solve them yourself. And I believe we have seen successes, of which I will highlight, but progress is a never-ending road that is measured by inches not miles. A pursuit that we must never relinquish; despite the challenges and obstacles encountered along the way in the effort to see the scales of liberty and justice balanced for all those in this great country and county.

My question to each of you in attendance tonight is- what is government? And what is your role within that government?

Oxford defines government as a noun; the governing body of a nation, state, or community.

In this context we will focus on the word community and how it relates to government and vice versa

And let us all remember who our county is: it is the residents totaling north of 550,000 who collectively call Stanislaus County home. Our mission statement is simple and clear; Here in Stanislaus County WE BUILD COMMUNITY. But this is not built by the 5 of us on the dais, but by the nearly 5,000 employees within the various agencies and departments.

Our employees here in Stanislaus County consistently answer the call of service and

are dedicated to making our community a better place to live, work and raise a family. I trust the Board will continue to support our employees, giving them the proper tools and resources for them to be successful in their work; and in turn this will make our county successful. For we must always keep in mind who it is and what it is we are working for- as which local government has always been meant to be closest to the people it represents; accessible and accountable to the community: I believe this must always be the standard in Stanislaus County.

In Stanislaus, we are all part of something bigger than ourselves and side by side, together, we are stronger. With each voice, whether echoed from Turlock, Newman, or Oakdale- we are united with a clear-eyed approach that emphasizes solutions. Solutions based in no concern of who bares the credit. For our worth as elected officials isn't based in the title which we hold, but in what is delivered to those we represent.

This is especially true for me, representing the most underserved areas in the county, District 5. Neighborhoods that have gone without for generations- where in South Modesto school children bring extra pairs of clothing to change into once at school, of pants-soaked knee high when it rains and floods. The elderly and disabled who are unable to freely navigate their community due unlevel dirt and gravel paths that offer no other option than to travel in the street.

I'm tremendously proud of the leadership this Board showed in allocating \$55.8 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds to community infrastructure in county urban

pockets. As we all know sitting here, this is not nearly enough- not nearly enough, but in addition our Board has worked with county staff to establish a new program that redirects end of the year savings to directly benefit infrastructure projects in each district. This newly established program has directed an additional \$15 million in County General Funds to support infrastructure projects in the current fiscal year, and together with our ARPA funds, over \$70 million in direct investments to improve neighborhoods throughout Stanislaus County will be made in the next several years. The task is now at hand to move as efficiently and effectively as possible in order to make our dollar stretch the farthest it can go and to cover as many streets as possible. I would like take the moment to acknowledge Debrief, a small local organization of three passionate individuals, who were contracted to perform extensive outreach efforts, which consisted of holding public meetings and surveying underserved communities throughout the county, walking door to door across those unlevel dirt and gravel roads; seeking a true and accurate representation of the needs of the community.

I also want to personally thank our State Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil, who has submitted a state budget request of matching funds of the \$16 million dollars that was allocated for my District specifically that could potentially result in \$32 million overall for the Parklawn and Bret Harte communities in South Modesto.

The realist in me understands that this ambitious request may not survive the Governor's veto pen, but I am proud of the efforts made to bring attention of some of our most vulnerable neighborhoods to the Governor's Office, and I commend and

appreciate our Senator for that. As a county we will only be as strong as our weakest link. That is true with every organization. We must do better, and I believe we will do better to ensure we don't leave communities like South Modesto behind for another generation.

So, again I ask you- What is government? What is your role in this process? What impacts can be made, and have been made due to your input?

One of the greatest benefits I find in being in this role, is meeting and hearing about life stories and experiences from folks all over the county, understanding their perspectives and trying to conjure up solutions to problems. I understand that not everyone is able to attend our public meetings- whether it be work, school, or lack of childcare. Whatever the reason may be, I think each of us can understand how in one way or another, life can get in the way. I personally would be in favor of more night meetings, such as why I chose to hold this address tonight, but with all the activities whatever they may be; there will always be a portion of the population who will not be able to engage our Board here at the dais. The facts of life are reasonable and understanding, but what we as a society must not excuse- what we cannot afford to excuse, is the attitude of indifference. Now more than ever is a need for civic engagement, whether it be in these Board Chambers or beyond. We must not settle for apathetic challenges of government, without daring to challenge ourselves to get involved through engagement. Whether it's through volunteerism or by simply sending an email- we all must do our part to not sit on the sidelines. I understand the public cynicism of government- I understand the mistrust.

Government doesn't plead for trust, but earns it. This trust is earned through action and accountability- but this is shared through a bond and commitment of the public.

So again, what is government to you?

I do appreciate those who are afforded the opportunity to show up to these meetings, and whether they are in agreement with our line of thinking or not, your comments and the time you take out of your day is not lost on us, who have the privilege and honor of representing you. Individuals such as John Mataka, Miguel Donoso, Keryn Whitlow, Steven Morrow, among others. Your advocacy, your perspective and concern for your communities represent the essence of what our government should be- a reflection of all of us. A reflection of our community.

I find those reflections in community members across our county- such as Newman-Crows Landing Unified School Board Member RoseLee Hurst and her husband Bill, who are some of the most selfless people I know. Whether volunteering for their church, in the past delivering meals to homebound seniors in Newman, or Bill, who has volunteered countless hours with the Newman Fire Department. I have had the honor of recognizing these individuals; RoseLee, District 5's 2022 "Outstanding Senior Citizen of the Year, and most recently recognizing Bill as District 5's Veteran of the Year for his honorable service during Vietnam.

Albertina Reynoso, who works as the lead Promotora at the Family Resource Center in

Patterson. Who has committed her life to ensure at-risk families have an advocate fighting for them. Her work with the Promotora's of Patterson benefited countless lives through the pandemic, coordinating and distributing protective equipment to some of the most vulnerable populations on the westside of the county in Grayson.

Or Martha Villasenor, who has been committed to representing her community on the South Modesto Municipal Advisory Committee, and was successful in circulating a petition throughout the Parklawn community; gathering the hundreds of signatures needed to make a case of community support of speed humps being established in her South Modesto neighborhood.

These individuals aren't ones to seek praise, though they deserve it. But it is what they do, with no need or want to receive accolades that make a difference that has a ripple affect on the lives they touch. That is community in action. That is the very best reflection of government.

Another project, I am extremely proud of is the long-awaited Bonita Pool Project in the community of Crows Landing. I want to sincerely thank State Senator Ana Caballero for her hard work in securing the needed funding of \$3 million for this project, after inflation and cost drove the construction costs significantly above the grant funding our county was originally rewarded. This is a perfect example of our state partners working closely with our organization and members of the community to see what they can do in Sacramento in finding solutions to best benefit us locally.

Along with myself, my fellow Board members have been hard at work on behalf of our constituents and have exciting developments in our respective districts, and I know their constituents appreciate all their efforts.

In District 4, Supervisor Grewal has been a strong advocate for the widening of McHenry Avenue, which improves traffic safety and our roads. He recently led the charge of a community cleanup effort of Daly Avenue, and has been a strong advocate for beautification projects along the Tuolumne River, and across the county. District 4 will also greatly benefit from the ARPA infrastructure funds, with much needed infrastructure improvements in South Modesto along River Road and Bystrum, as well as in the Airport District, which has also gone without for generations.

Supervisor Withrow has fought hard for his district as well, with his advocacy in making the Salida Sheriff Substation a reality, which will restore a much-needed resource in increasing public safety for our Salida residents. He has fought for and seen through the transformative State Route 132 project, which has been a significant undertaking through the decades; with the recent completion of phase one and the future phases 2 and 3 which will go through Gates Road. This project will greatly benefit our public and commercial usage and increase traffic safety for those traveling across our county. The Riverdale Park Tract in District 3 will also be a significant benefactor of ARPA funds for curbs, gutters, and sidewalks.

Supervisor Chiesa ensured that the annexation of Kenwood Island in Turlock would come to fruition. Has worked hard and fought for funding in efforts for the completion of the Hickman and Santa Fe bridge projects. Through his many years of advocacy, we saw the completion of the Empire and Turlock Libraries; and he is someone our county consistently turns to when it's time to fight for county funding in Sacramento and Washington DC.

In District 1, Supervisor Buck Condit has worked hard to reform ERAF funding for reimbursements of our local fire districts through Prop. 172, which benefit all of us by further supporting public safety. Along with his continuous work on the North County Corridor, his advocacy for the construction of a walk path in Valley Home was approved, providing much needed access for his constituents in that community, and recently hosted the 2nd Annual Valley Home Spring Community Cleanup Event.

I applaud each of my fellow board members for their work, in listening and acting on the concerns of their constituents in their respective districts. Your input as the public gives each of us something to aspire too, with these projects and others alike gaining momentum due to the input and need in each community with the goal of improving our quality of life throughout Stanislaus County.

One of these projects that has been very near and dear to my heart, has been the need for an afterhours medical care facility on the westside of our county. Currently speaking, the entire stretch of Highway 33; from Newman to Westley and Grayson are without a 7

day a week, afterhours medical facility. This is a clear quality of life issue, that our westside residents live with on a daily basis. Patterson is currently our fastest growing community within the county, and the time is long overdue to answer the needs of our westside residents in delivering afterhours healthcare. I am proud to say, and without going into too many details- We currently have a proposal- a proposal is on the table to answer the basic healthcare needs of our westside residents. If this is successful; and I believe it will be- with the support and usage of the community- it will be the necessary steps to take in attracting a long-term health provider. We will need to crawl before we walk; walk before we run, but this progress being made could be the start of making a full fledged hospital on the westside a reality over the decades to come. I do want to sincerely express my gratitude to our county staff for all their hard work behind the scenes, and specifically Ruben Imperial. This is a very exciting moment in time on this issue, and I believe we are all up to the challenge in getting this done for our westside residents.

Building from that, I would also like to highlight the significant progress being made in our relationship with all our 9 cities in Stanislaus County over the last year. For well over a decade, there have been numerous conversations regarding the property tax sharing agreement, which for the last 25 years has been a 70/30 split favoring the county. With the effort of this Board in conjunction with our City Mayors, a 50/50 property tax sharing agreement was made a reality; and will pay huge dividends for our incorporated cities, of which are responsible for 80% of where our county population resides. I am proud of this Board for recognizing that the success of our cities is the success for our county,

and this agreement is evidence of that.

Like many counties across the valley, we have struggled in how to sustain jobs for our residents. I am proud of the steps this Board has taken in partnership with the Stanislaus Community Foundation in crafting the vision for our future economy. The Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint displays that far too many families are currently struggling in our local economy, and those struggles disproportionately impact our most vulnerable residents living in disadvantaged communities. These challenges may take decades to address, but the work must begin now with a clear vision for how we can move forward together as a community to deliver higher quality jobs to our residents, while also helping everyone compete equally in the economy we have today. Stanislaus 2030 sets this vision and provides a comprehensive playbook for how to bring additional investments into our community that we historically miss out on. While I'm very pleased to see this Board support up to \$18 million in direct investments to fund recommendations within the Investment Blueprint, I am thrilled to see outside investment already occurring within just months of our Board taking action. Just this past week, we learned of new grants from Federal and State agencies that will put us over the \$5 million mark in new funding for our community, funding that would not exist without the County Board of Supervisors prioritizing economic development and recognizing our collective responsibility to use our time in County leadership to help shape a better economy, providing equal support to all residents of our community. While I am very proud of the work I do each day to learn about the challenges individual

members of my district face, and what I can do to help them, I am equally proud of the seeds we are planting for the future that will bear fruit for generations to come.

Part of securing an economic future for our residents is also protecting and fighting for our precious water rights. We are under constant threat from Sacramento to chip away and weaken our access to our most valuable resource. As a county government- as a community; we must collectively unite and push back on these efforts every turn of the way- or else face the consequences of these extreme measures that put our livelihoods at risks.

So, in conclusion- What is government? What is it to you?

I believe government is as Lincoln stated at his address in Gettysburg; one that is for and by the people... and is only successful by the participation and engagement of the people.

What I believe is the perfect symbolic representation of government is that of a mirror... Some of us avoid them at all cost. Some of us like to stop and stare without hesitation. Society is that mirror- or at least the one who holds it. Government is that mirror. Our government is supposed to be a reflection of ourselves, and either you like what you see, or you avoid what is in front of you. And quite frankly, on a broader scale, for the most part the imagine staring back at us- the embodiment of our representation has become unrecognizable due to that avoidance. But until we can address the reflection in the mirror, until we can collectively address what is in front of our faces, we will only

continue to see what we wish to change. The reflection in front of us isn't perfect- and neither is government. But we must resist indifference- we must resist cynicism. It's time each of us took the responsibility in holding up that mirror in order to take a hard look at what is staring back at us- even at times we wish not too, because that is when self-examination is at its highest importance. For accountability is not just for those of who we criticize, but us who take on the responsibility to enact change. It is not only our duty to ourselves, but our civic duty for all.